



University of Hawai'i Myron B. Thompson School of Social Work

IMPROVING QUALIFYING EXAM PERFORMANCE

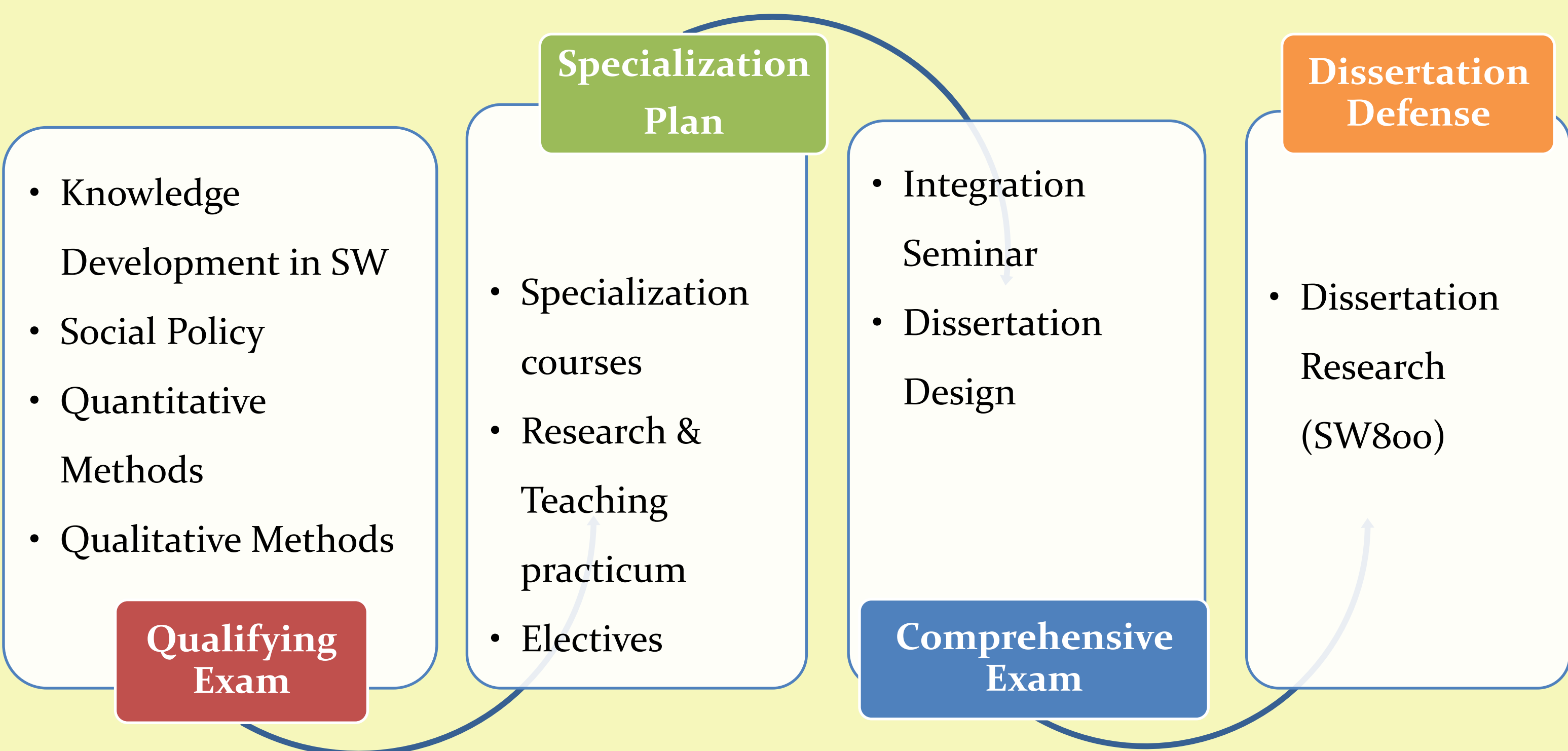
FROM ASSESSMENT DATA TO CURRICULUM ALIGNMENT

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PhD in Social Welfare Program

- Established in 1991
- Only PhD in Social Welfare program in Hawai'i and Pacific Basin
- Emphasizes leadership development in social welfare education, practice, policy development, and research
- Promotes social justice and global understanding through scholarly inquiry using scientific methods including indigenous and mixed method approaches
- Affirms School's vision and mission and emphasizes knowledge development which enhances the wellbeing of Native Hawaiians, and the diverse people and communities of Hawai'i and the Asian-Pacific Region.

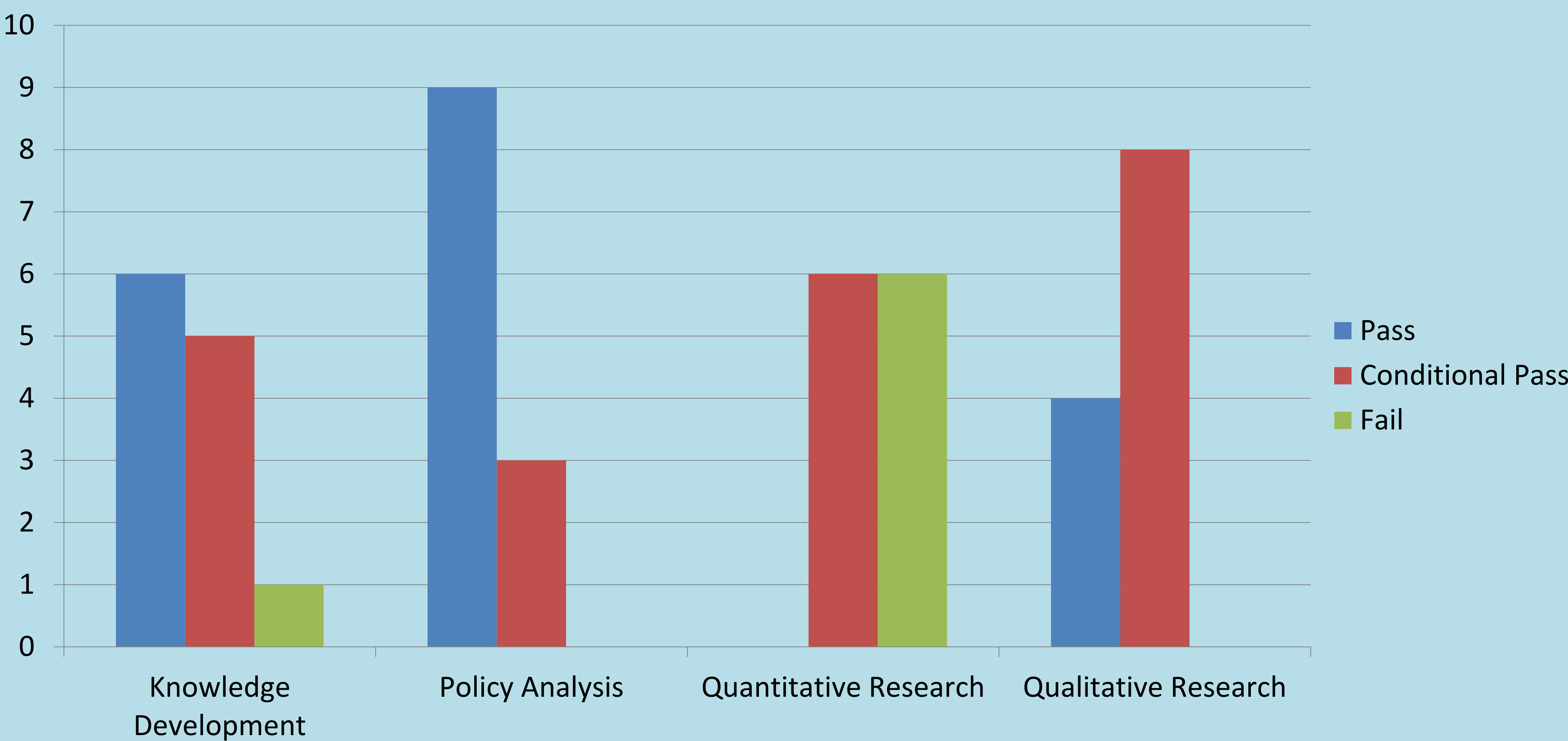


Qualifying Exam (QE)

To assess students' knowledge, analytic competence, and ability to apply and integrate concepts across the four main areas of the core curriculum – Knowledge Development, Social Policy Analysis, Qualitative Methods, and Quantitative Methods:

- QE taken as core courses are successfully completed
- Administered over two days, 4 hours of testing time each day, two topic sections per day
- Students receive one of the following grades per section: Pass, Conditional Pass, or Fail

Qualifying Exam Results (Cohorts 2010-2014)



Investigation

Over the years, the PhD Committee noticed that students had difficulty passing the Quantitative Methods section of the QE on the first try. The committee looked at the QE test results of the 12 students in cohorts 2010-2014.

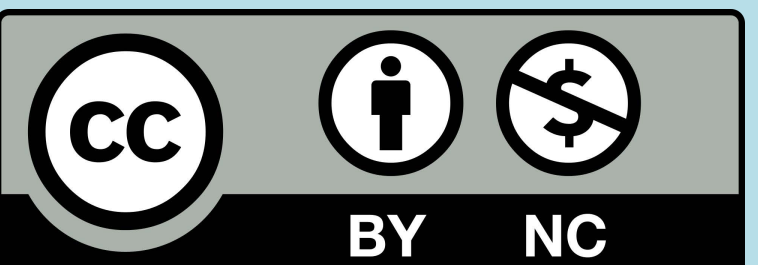
- Most students earned a grade of Pass or Conditional Pass on their first take of the Knowledge Development, Social Policy Analysis, and Qualitative Methods sections of the QE
- None earned a Pass on their first take of the Quantitative Methods section of the QE.

Discussion/Considerations

- First year PhD students engaged in continuous learning – consider students' capacity at the point of testing
- Collaborate closely with course instructors – respect instructors and course content in relation to study guide and test question alignment
- Timing of QE – allow students to sit for certain sections of the QE as they complete the related core courses
- Focus on testing knowledge and ability to apply knowledge to research question

For more information, please contact us at jenkishi@hawaii.edu or jingguo@hawaii.edu

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Actions

- Reviewed core course syllabi
- Reviewed student guide practice questions based on syllabi content
- Updated QE study guide to support student preparation
- Updated QE questions (content/format/types of questions) as needed
- Adapted logistics of QE scheduling and administration

"The study guide provided me with direction on how to go about to prepare for the examination for each area. Since there is so much content/information that you get during the first year...the study guide helped me to focus my efforts. In addition, similar to successful license preparatory courses that teach you (not answers) but some of the mechanics of the exam, the study guide helped me develop my thoughts for each content area. All in all, the study guide helped to reinforce the key lessons taught from each of our instructors...I often find myself looking back to review the work I did for that exam because it helped to further synthesize the knowledge!" M. Garrido (2nd year PhD student)

Lessons learned

- Use evaluation and assessment to support student success
- PhD Committee is a good channel for engaging faculty
- Fostering connections with faculty in other UHM departments strengthens our program and students



Acknowledgements:

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